

Military Toronto – 1793 through the 1940s

From 1776 through approximately the next 100 years, the over-riding concern of the military establishment in Canada was the defense of the 1500 miles long border between it and the United States. In that time peace existed for only 13 years – 1763 (with the defeat of the French) - to 1776 (the start of the American Revolution). York's harbor justified its establishment as a military installation and naval port. **Toronto was born of the military.** It was only later that it became Upper-Canada's capital.



Lt. Gov John Graves Simcoe
York's (Toronto's) founder



View of Toronto Harbour 1793

Painted by Elizabeth Simcoe
Showing military tents - the community's first residences

Toronto and its citizens have played a role in all the wars involving Upper and Lower Canada (1763-1841), the Province of Canada (1841-1867) and the Dominion of Canada. (1867 -) and even a role in some wars not involving Canada. By showing letters, post cards and documents, (mostly in chronological order) this exhibit will highlight Toronto's (York from 1793 to 1834) part in conflicts from the War of 1812 through World War II. The exhibit stops at the end of the 1940's. Shortly thereafter the Canadian military was re-organized and the organization by Military Districts, in existence from the mid-1800s, was no more.

Toronto's involvement in Canada's war serves as a mirror for the whole. While each of the parts shown in the following frames could be exploded and shown with more detail with materials from other parts of Canada, that is not the purpose of this exhibit. What follows is a view of Canadian wars through the eyes of Toronto.

Frame 1 – War of 1812 – Boer War
Frame 2 – World War I – World War II

Frame 2 – Boer War – World War I
Frame 4 – World War II